

ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE REPORT
2012 Drought Response Task Force
July 11, 2012

The first half of 2012 was the sixth driest on record, according to the Illinois State Water Survey. Precipitation throughout the state averaged just 12.6 inches for the January through June period, or nearly seven inches below normal. In addition, every month this year has had above normal temperatures and the statewide average of 52.8 degrees for the past six months is the warmest on record.

This combination of extremely hot and dry weather has caused Illinois crop conditions to deteriorate. The Illinois Department of Agriculture is working closely with its federal counterparts, specifically the Farm Service Agency (FSA), to determine whether Illinois qualifies for an agricultural disaster declaration because of drought-related crop losses. An indication of the scope of the damage should emerge after July 13, the date farmers must certify their crops that are enrolled in FSA programs. Such a declaration would qualify farmers for USDA assistance programs, including low-interest emergency loans. A link to FSA's emergency programs is provided on the department's website at www.agr.state.il.us

The department has produced an online directory to help Illinois producers locate hay if their pastures have been badly damaged by drought and they have no feed for their livestock. The directory, which is free of charge, can be accessed at <http://www.agr.state.il.us/markets/hay/>. Copies also are available by calling the Bureau of Marketing and Promotion at (217) 782-4925.

The department also is an active participant on the Drought Response Task Force, a group consisting of representatives from various federal and state agencies whose sole responsibility is to monitor the conditions of the state's water resources and coordinate the state's response to drought situations. Its goal is to provide state and local officials with information and tools that promote better decision-making in water supply planning and reduce drought-related impacts.

In addition, attached is the latest edition of "Illinois Weather & Crops", which provides an update of statewide crop, weather and moisture conditions.

Further, Director Robert Flider transmitted a letter to USDA Secretary Thomas Vilsack on July 10 explaining the ominous circumstances ag producers are currently facing or may be facing in the immediate future from the severe drought and asking for expedited federal assistance for Illinois and the rest of the Midwest.

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